



PRESIDÊNCIA DO
CONSELHO
DE MINISTROS

VI GOVERNO CONSTITUCIONAL
GABINETE DO MINISTRO DE ESTADO E DA PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE
MINISTROS

Cristo Rei, 25 April, 2017

Today, in locations across the globe, the sun will rise over many gatherings such as this one, where Australians and New Zealanders stand to honor their service men and women.

And in hundreds of ceremonies, as we do today, the citizens of other nations will stand alongside them, to quietly demonstrate our solidarity and respect.

This morning, it is an honour for me to offer these remarks on behalf of the Government of Timor-Leste on this ANZAC Day.

At this very moment as we stand here, veterans of our long and brutal struggle for independence are standing alongside Australian servicemen in Yass, Hobart and Brisbane.

In a few hours time, some of our former FALINTIL fighters will march with Australian and New Zealand service personnel through the streets of Brisbane as part of that city's commemoration of ANZAC.

We do this because of our friendship and our shared military history.



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Nearly seventy-five years ago, as the sun rose here in Díli, around 300 Australian soldiers up in the hills behind us were involved in an action that held down over 10,000 Japanese troops for almost a year. Their efforts were heroic.

The handful that are still alive today, continue to tell that without the support of the Timorese who assisted them all would have been lost.

And you would already know that the support of the Timorese villagers and young men; offering food and shelter, carrying supplies and acting as guides, were to cost us Timorese greatly.

When the Australian commandos withdrew in 1943 up to 60,000 of our people were killed during the Japanese occupation which lasted until the end of the war.

Many of these Australian soldiers, ever aware of this cost, devoted their lives to repaying what they saw as 'debt of honour' to our people.

Their 'heart for Timor' lives on in the work and interest of their families, with children and grandchildren continuing their mission.

Last Friday, some of our veterans travelled to Northern Queensland and visited Lavarack Army Base in Townsville, recognizing another part of our shared history.

The base is the Head Quarters of the 3rd Brigade which provided the nucleus of the INTERFET deployment to Timor-Leste in 1999; and then Operation Astute in 2006.



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These were deployments that our people welcomed; and that helped us to reduce conflict and rebuild a stable security environment.

The New Zealand Defence Force deployed significant Navy, Air Force and Army personnel as part of INTEFET and was also involved in the stabilization efforts from 2006 onwards.

Both Defence forces have made significant contributions by training and supporting our national security institutions.

Today, as we remember Australian and New Zealand service men and women, we reflect on their spirit of sacrifice. And we think of our own national heroes, recognizing that, without them, we would not enjoy the liberty and freedom we have today.

And yet in this reflection we are realistic about conflict:

We know the brutality of it, the devastation it unleashes, the scars it can create that last for generations.

And remembering this we are thankful for peace, and for all those who are champions of peace.

Lest we forget



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